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Behind the Secrecy

LONG-STANDING complaints that the Central Intelligence Agency has become a major influence on foreign policy are too numerous to be ignored. It is therefore with considerable justification that the Senate Foreign Relations Committee has approved a resolution that would place three of its members among the Senate's overseers of the CIA.

Current holders of the "watch-dog" franchise—members of the Armed Forces and Appropriations committees—are opposed, partly on the ground that, as Armed Services Chairman Russell put it, no other committee should "muscle in." But his only answer to the foreign-policy allegation is that there's "not a scintilla of truth" in it.

Scrutiny of the CIA must, of course, be carried out with utmost respect for the secrecy required for its statutory function, the gathering of foreign intelligence. But two developments in the last month alone offer samples of what seemingly could be checked adequately without handicapping the CIA's basic job.

Chief of these is an article, "The Faceless Viet Cong," in Foreign Affairs magazine. This supports the CIA argument that the National Liberation Front in South Viet Nam is a puppet of Communist North Viet Nam—but fails to identify the author as a full-time CIA analyst. The other is the report that Michigan State University received five CIA men along with its federal grant for helping South Viet Nam train police forces. These cases raise questions of where else the CIA may have worked its way into domestic publications and institutions.

There is no evidence the present "watch dogs" have felt it in their province to look deeply into such allegations.